

Overview of the Role of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

by Eric Ice

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is the bus and truck modal agency within the Department of Transportation. The primary mission is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses.

The FMCSA was established as a separate administration within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) on January 1, 2000, pursuant to the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999. FMCSA employs 46 people in Arizona, all dedicated to improving the safety of commercial motor vehicles (CMV) and saving lives. Prior to 2000 what is now FMCSA was "Office of Motor Carriers" within the Federal Highway Administration.

Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP)

The MCSAP is a Federal grant program that provides financial assistance to States to reduce the number and severity of crashes and hazardous materials incidents involving commercial motor vehicles (CMV).

Motor Carrier Safety Identification and Information Systems

FMCSA uses and shares safety data gathered from driver/vehicle checks conducted at the roadside, compliance reviews, new entrant audits, industry provided data, State and national crash statistics, for analysis to determine detailed motor carrier safety performance.

Border and International Safety

FMCSA supports the development of compatible motor carrier safety requirements and procedures throughout North America.

Commercial Driver's License Program Standards

FMCSA develops, monitors, and ensures compliance with the commercial driver licensing standards for drivers, carriers, and States.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) / Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMRs)

FMCSA develops, maintains, and enforces Federal regulations that promote carrier safety, industry productivity, and new technologies. FMCSRs establish safe operating requirements for commercial vehicle drivers, carriers, vehicles, and vehicle equipment. These include:

- Financial Responsibility (insurance)
- Registration and Operating Authority
- Drug Testing

- Driver Qualification
- Hours of Service Restriction
- Maintenance

FMCSA enforces HMRs, which are designed to ensure the safe and secure transportation of hazardous materials. These rules address the classification of hazardous materials, proper packaging, employee training, hazard communication, and operational requirements.

New Entrant Safety Assurance Process

FMCSA ensures that new entrant motor carriers (carriers applying for a new USDOT number) are knowledgeable about applicable Federal motor carrier safety and hazardous materials regulations.

Performance & Registration Information Systems Management (PRISM)

PRISM is a Federal-State partnership that makes safe performance a requirement for obtaining and keeping commercial vehicle registration.